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WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION®

RAW

April 1999 ▪ Volume 4 ▪ Number 4

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On The Cover:
Sable gets our vote for Playmate of the year!

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WARNING WARNING WARNING

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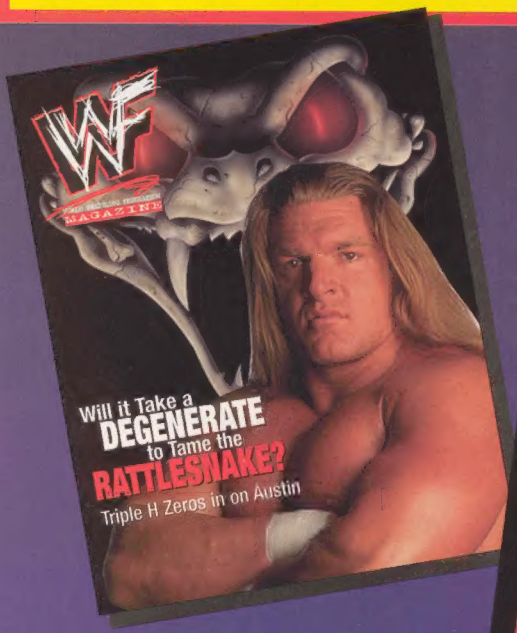
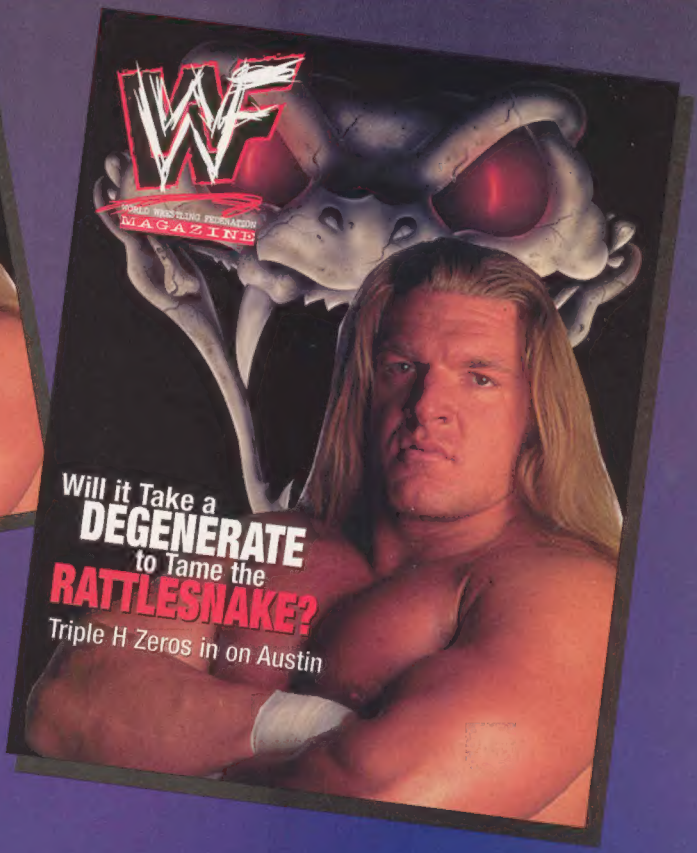




WF ATTITUDE™

Come get some!

A Commentary By Vince Russo

The Unsung Heroes

DISCLAIMER: THE VIEWS AND OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS COLUMN ARE SOLELY THOSE OF VINCE RUSSO, AND NOT NECESSARILY SHARED BY THOSE REPRESENTING THE WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION AND TITAN SPORTS.

I SWEAR—I am not even going to address the two watchdog groups that deemed "A Day at the Office," the World Wrestling Federation Super Bowl commercial, indecent.

No, I'm not gonna cut a promo on either Morality in Media or The American Family Association. Everybody's entitled to his or her own opinion. Remember... this is America. But I'll tell you what—it scares the hell out of me that people like this are allowed to run loose in the good ol' U. S. of A. In my humble opinion, these people should be shackled, straitjacketed and kept away—far away—from society. Not only are they the real SICKOS—but they're also extremely DANGEROUS. Dangerous to themselves... and dangerous to us SANE people!!!

I mean, C'MON!!! You all saw the Super Bowl spot. Are you kiddin' me—OR WHAT?!!! What wasn't there TO GET?!!! But you see—that's just my point. Some people just choose NOT to "GET IT." Instead, they choose to label themselves "the elite" and assume the right to tell the rest of us what's "wrong with our world." What's "bad" for us. What we should see... and shouldn't see. I mean, if "A Day at the Office" is indecent—what the hell do you call the Victoria's Secret spot? Viewing adult women parading around in their bras and panties is enough to BLIND a man, for cryin' out loud!!! But, hey, we can't all be frogs burpin' and shittin' on lily pads!!!

So, rather than lambaste a bunch of WACKOS who don't deserve my time, I would much rather praise the UNSUNG HERO who made every one of our fans damn proud of the World Wrestling Federation's showing at the Super Bowl—the creative genius behind "A Day at the Office", David Sahadi.

With the support of the greatest production team in all of television, David Sahadi is the Federation's Stone Cold Steve Austin "behind" the camera. With his artistic touch he has given shape and personality to just about every superstar who has ever set foot into a World Wrestling Federation ring. From the Undertaker to Mankind, Sahadi has been instrumental in giving each personality an image. Defining the lines of who every superstar is... and what each one represents. Sahadi's spot featuring the Legends of the World Wrestling Federation will never be forgotten. I, personally, witnessed the art bring tears to the boss' eyes. And... it is art. It's what makes the World Wrestling Federation what it is.

And Sahadi is not alone.

The list of those unsung heroes who make it all tick is endless. It begins with Executive Producer Kevin Dunn. Why this guy hasn't been committed is beyond me. For well over a decade he has been strapped to the side of Vince McMahon, and not only is he still around to talk about it—but he LOVES IT!!! Now, that's a glutton for punishment!!! However, if not for this glutton—we'd be called *Nitro*!!! And, the list goes on. There's Sahadi's partner in crime—Chris Chambers—a guy who once walked away from it all... ONLY TO RETURN FOR EVEN MORE PUNISHMENT!!! Yeah, they're all nutz—but take one from the asylum... and the whole joint would go crazy!!!

Man, I'm gonna forget people—but I'm doing my best. Jennifer Good—the hardest-working woman in the business. Kerwin Silfies—"THE DIRECTOR". Do you have any idea what it means to be "THE DIRECTOR" when you have a man named VINCE breathin' down your neck? Personally... I'd rather be burpin' and shittin' on a lily pad somewhere. Adam Pennucci—so young... yet so talented. Chris Lawler, Doug LeBow, Bob Clarke, Barry Bross, Mike Calabrese, Lori Sims, John Arnold, the "Music Man" Jim Johnston, George, Russ, John McCall, Jill in make-up, Kevin Quinn, Chris Argento, "The Wizard" Dave Benoit, John Bennett, Bill "Graphics" Goertel, Mr. & Mrs. Carlucci, Duncan Leslie and the list goes on and on and on!!!

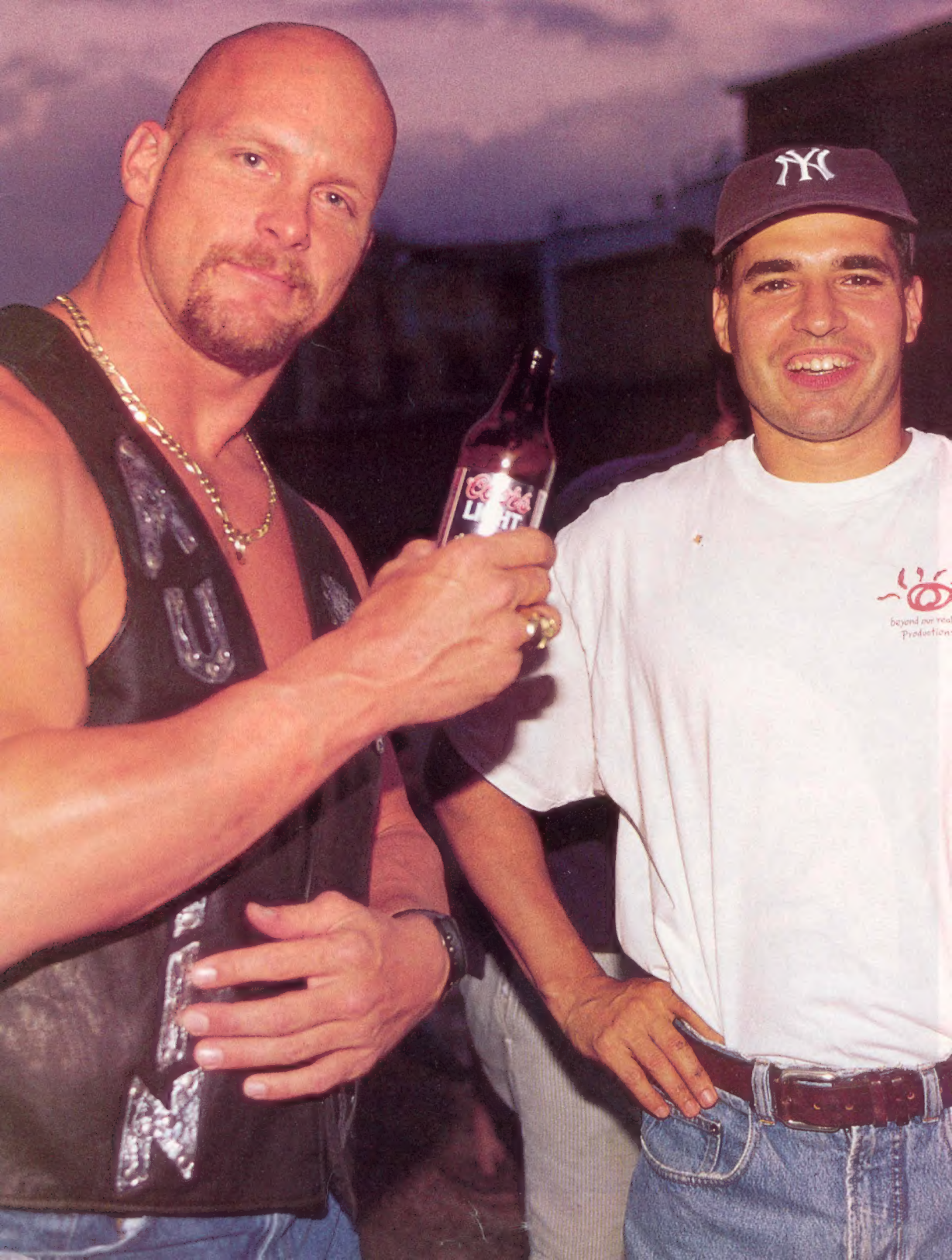
All those listed above are the reasons I will never stop fightin' the fight. They all work too damn hard—and too damn long—to let a couple of jack-off individuals and jack-off pro- "MY ASS" groups sour the cream. They all stand proud and have every reason to. Titan Sports is a family, and the only thing "indecent" are those critics who will never—EVER—get that!!!

Now, with all that said—next year I expect X-mas presents from each and every one of yous!!!

Oh, and Sue—I didn't forget you. As a matter of fact—I'll dedicate the whole damn article to ya!!! That is, of course, if you find me a transvestite... with a speech impediment... who has a lust for angry, drunken dwarfs!!!

And... DON'T FORGET THE CHICKEN!!!

Later!!! ■

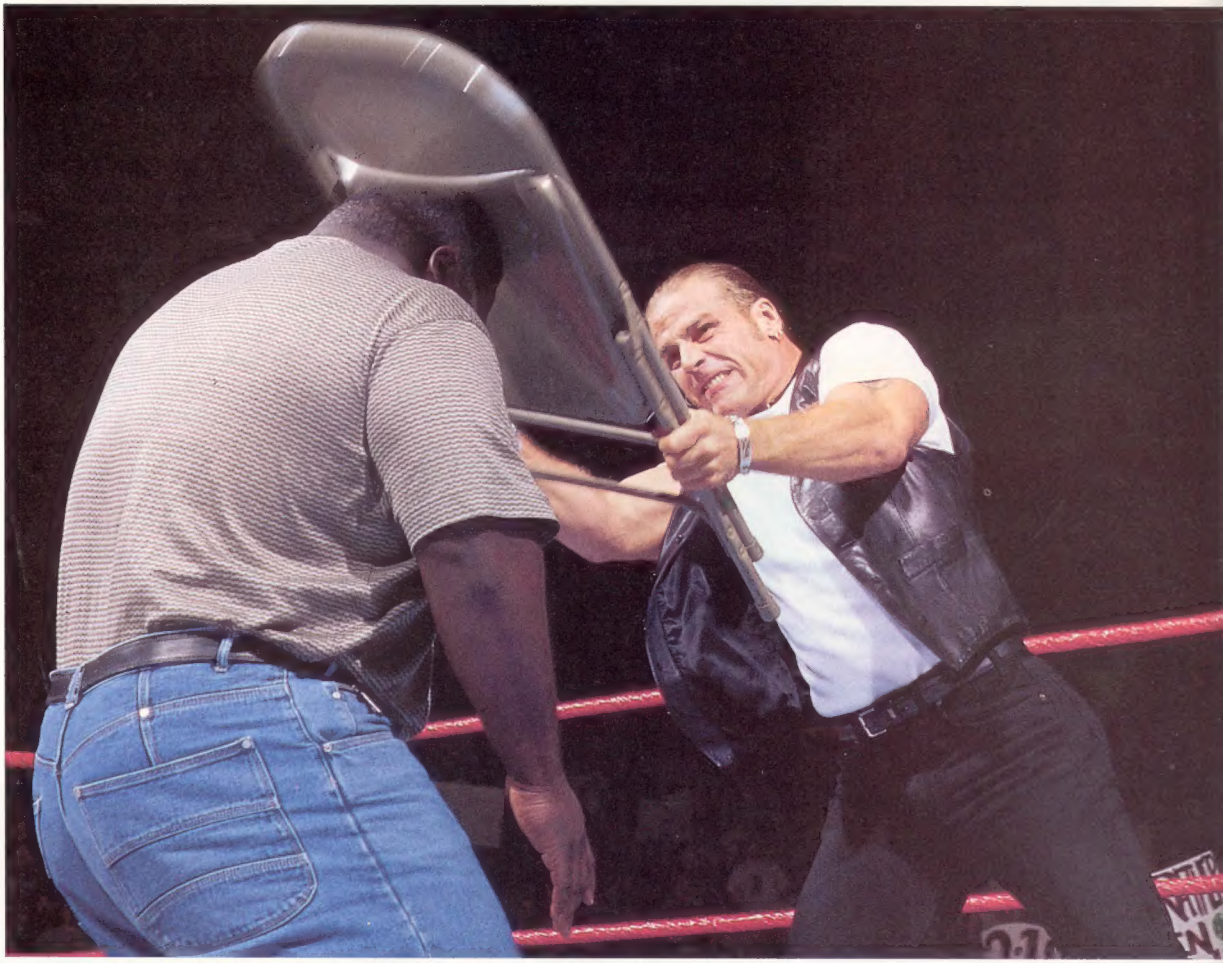

beyond our real
Productions

Eye For An Eye... Ear For An Eyebrow?

How serious is MICK FOLEY about putting THE ROCK out of commission? The word I, the INFORMER, get is that the "KING OF HARDCORE" is willing to put his body on the line again... LITERALLY!

I, the INFORMER, have been informed by my sources in the MEDICAL COMMUNITY that FOLEY recently asked his FAMILY DOCTOR if losing his other ear would affect his long-term hearing at all! Why would he do such a thing? I, the INFORMER, am hearing rumors that MICK wants to put THE ROCK through the ultimate humiliation and is contemplating challenging his nemesis to a "EAR vs. EYEBROW" match!

From what I, the INFORMER, have been told about this possible bout, FOLEY would be willing to CUT OFF HIS OTHER EAR if he comes out on the losing end! However, if he can beat his foe, THE ROCK would be FORCED TO SHAVE his prized Corporate Eyebrow! Stay tuned for more on this huge story!



Hef Finds His Lifelong (Play)Mate?

Is HUGH HEFNER enamored of SABLE? I, the INFORMER, have been informed by some HIGHER-UPS at the PLAYBOY MANSION that the owner and publisher of the *PLAYBOY MAGAZINE* has been voicing HIS LOVE for the FEMME FATALE!

I, the INFORMER, understand that HEF'S affection for SABLE was apparent soon after he personally chose her over A DOZEN OTHER MODELS to grace the cover of his magazine! Following that, SABLE reported receiving FLOWERS and EXPENSIVE CHOCOLATES—IN THE SHAPE OF LITTLE BUNNIES—from an ANONYMOUS SENDER! I, the INFORMER, have also been informed that HEF is willing to do ANYTHING to win SABLE'S LOVE... including naming her PLAYMATE OF THE YEAR!

Does HBK Have His Own Plans For A Faction?

Just because TEAM CORPORATE and DX turned their backs on SHAWN MICHAELS doesn't mean HBK doesn't have plans to form HIS OWN FACTION! I, the INFORMER, predict that MICHAELS is contemplating putting together A NEW FORCE of FEDERATION SUPERSTARS to combat his enemies! I, the INFORMER, understand that not only does SHAWN have SPIES within both DX and TEAM CORPORATE... but they may be willing to REVEAL THEIR ALLEGIANCE to HBK when the time is right! I, the INFORMER, have also dug up something peculiar in MICHAELS' HOME PHONE RECORDS... several calls to MATT AND JEFF HARDY! I, the INFORMER, can only assume one thing from this—HBK sees a little of himself, or HIS FORMER TAG TEAM, in the youngsters!

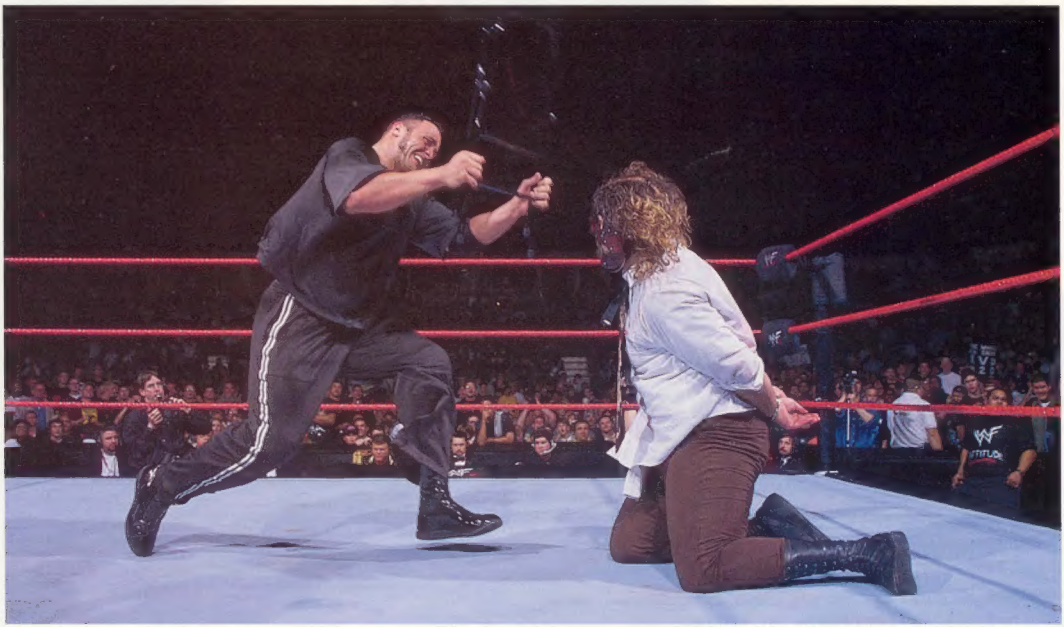
DOES SHANE HAVE A BAD HABIT?

Even I, the INFORMER, could get fired for reporting this story! During a recent trip to the TITAN TOWER MEN'S ROOM for a number one, I, the INFORMER, overheard SHANE McMAHON in the number-two stall talking to someone named "VINNY" on his CELL PHONE about a BET on a certain *WRESTLEMANIA* XV match! Is the CO-OWNER gambling DAD'S MONEY on FEDERATION MATCHES? From what I, the INFORMER, have heard from VEGAS BOOKIES, SHANE could already be IN THE HOLE!

Was Nostradamus Right?

I, the INFORMER, predicted right here in the February issue of *RAW Magazine* that a WAR between GOOD AND EVIL would take place this summer, signaling the DAY OF RECKONING! But I, the INFORMER, never realized HOW SERIOUS it could be! From what I, the INFORMER, understand, religious leader REVEREND JERRY FALWELL has been telling anyone who will listen that the END IS NEAR because he believes the ANTI-CHRIST to be... THE UNDERTAKER! I, the INFORMER, have heard from VARIOUS CHURCH LEADERS that by the end of 1999, they believe THE SAVIOR will make his identity known for the FINAL BATTLE against THE MINISTRY OF DARKNESS! Even I, the INFORMER, am frightened by this story! ■

Letters To The Editor:



E-mail

Dear Editor,

I just watched the 1999 *Royal Rumble*, and all I can say is, "Wow!" I can't believe all the punishment the superstars took. Whether it was Stone Cold Steve Austin in the ladies' room getting beat up by Team Corporate or especially the beating Mick Foley took at the hands of The Rock—it was outstanding. Each Pay-Per-View, Foley continues to remind us why he will go down as one of the best in the sport. But I'd hate to be his wife watching at home—that's got to be tough for her to take!

Eric Arnold
Bowdon, Georgia

E-mail

Dear Editor,

I think the "Secret Service of the Federation" article in the February issue of *Raw Magazine* was very interesting. I think the article was great for Jim Dotson because it finally gets him some due recognition. Fans will be able to appreciate him now for what he does—protecting the superstars. I was always wondering who he was and why he wasn't wrestling in the ring! However, when he says he has no interest in pursuing wrestling, I don't believe him. I don't think there is a person alive who wouldn't want millions of fans cheering them!

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- FRENCH CANADIAN REPORT: ***OPTION 7***

E-mail

Dear Editor,

I just wanted to say that I enjoyed Vince Russo's *Raw* commentary in the February issue of *Raw Magazine*. I don't know why there are so many people out there who make such a big deal out of middle fingers or certain other things they deem "inappropriate." I think the people who didn't like it were just the ones who can't accept the

new direction of the World Wrestling Federation. These "conscience police" need to find another hobby than the one they have now. Start a stamp collection, for God's sake!
David Williams
Dkw01931@student.astate.edu

E-mail

Dear Editor,
When will Triple H get what he rightfully deserves—a main event push? The guy is one of the best superstars ever! HHH has great mic skills, ability and the fans love him. He's come such a long way from the "blue-blood" deal back in 1996 to where he is today with DX. The guy could obviously work a great match with Stone Cold Steve Austin, and I would love to see a feud develop between the two. It seems he's spent the better part of three years building himself up to main event status, and I think he's finally ready for it. As far as the rest of DX go, I think Hunter could go it without them against Stone Cold. HHH is a born leader—both for DX and the World Wrestling Federation.
Michael Husted
San Antonio, Texas

Letter

Dear Editor,
Will egos topple Team Corporate? After reading the article in the February issue of *Raw Magazine*, I believe they will! Doesn't anyone remember what happened when The Rock was in the same situation with the Nation? He assumed control from Faarooq and ended up destroying it! Who's to say The Rock won't do the same thing with Team Corporate? If he did it to Faarooq, what would stop him from screwing Vince over? Personally, I would love to see The Rock go out on his own again—I don't think he needs Vince in the first place!
Will Meyers
Naples, Florida

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RAGIN' ROSS!

By Jim Ross

IT IS MY GOAL TO BE back at ringside—or at least pretty damn close—by the time this is printed. Without question, your outpouring of support has served as excellent motivation for me to return to Raw and on Pay-Per-Views. My fingers are crossed for a return at WrestleMania XV in Philly.

If you've never attended a *WrestleMania* in person, it's hard to understand the intangibles that are a part of the industry's number-one Pay-Per-View attraction. I never attended a live *WrestleMania* until I debuted at *WrestleMania* IX at Caesars Palace in a TOGA! But let me tell you, and this isn't corporate hype from some world-class shill, this event is like no other I've ever been associated with. I mean, this is like three or four trips to the facilities to deal with a heavyweight case of nerves! And you would think after as many events as I've done with virtually all the top organizations that being nervous wouldn't even be a consideration. Wrong. And I can't quite tell you why. *WrestleMania* is certainly the most successful annual Pay-Per-View event in existence and there's got to be a good reason for it. There is. This March 28th spectacular, as all the others before it, will deliver. Take it to the bank! I just hope I'm sitting at ringside to be a part of it.

Have you ever been really disappointed in someone you were once very close to? Most of us have and it's not too much fun. Well, that's how I feel about *"Dr. Death" Steve Williams'* attitude since he returned from several months off to heal his hamstring after his shocking Brawl For All loss to *Bart Gunn*. I was probably the most surprised—hell, shocked—guy in the arena when Bart K.O.'d Doc. I took some good-natured, and deserved, ribbing for being such a supporter of the former Oklahoma Sooners two-sport athlete. But I got over it! Doc, what are you thinking and WHO'S giving you all this destructive advice? I have absolutely no problem with the Japanese culture and Japanese people, but Doc—you aren't Japanese! Why be so bitter to your family and friends?! How can you use our First Amendment rights to degrade our country on American television just because you got your ass knocked out?! It's not what I would have expected from one of the three or four toughest guys I've ever been associated with in this business.

It doesn't take being the class valedictorian to figure out that *Vince McMahon*'s corporation will throw some formidable and creative roadblocks at the *Rattlesnake* at *WrestleMania*. Can someone give me the reason why Mr. McMahon is so obsessed with professionally assassinating *Steve Austin*'s career? Does Vincent have deep-rooted, repressed thoughts of some childhood bully who used to steal his lunch money? Maybe it will be in Mr. McMahon's autobiography, which I hear is in the works. I wonder how, or if, he will address firing me twice? Should be a helluva read!

X-Pac has moved up to the next level, in my eyes. No one in the business has this kid's passion and desire, which can be both a blessing and a curse. Sean Waltman can be a big star for years to come, but some feel that chronic neck problems may curtail the high-flyer's career. I really hope not because he's just so much fun to watch. Could he be *DX*'s MVP?

The *Undertaker*'s Ministry is NOT a non-profit organization. Keep that thought in mind as time goes on...

Speaking of the *Ministry*, when do you think Mr. McMahon's corporate butt-kissers will attempt a very hostile takeover of the Undertaker's flock? It will happen.

The ladies of the World Wrestling Federation seem to be playing more major roles on television and I think that's great! Look for more major women to arrive in the Federation before the year's end.

One high-placed Federation official

bought HUNDREDS of *Playboy* magazines with *Sable* on the cover. WHY? And does his wife know?

Just wondering…

Why does *Al Snow* need his plastic *Head*?

What can we expect from *Goldust* this year?

Is *Val Venis* ready to stand on his own?

Why is the *Blue Meanie*?

Why isn't someone getting more out of the *Hardy Boyz*?

Will *Mark Henry* and *D'Lo Brown* ever be World Wrestling Federation Tag Team Champions?

Will *Droz* break Dennis Rodman's piercing record?

When is *Too Much* not enough?

Why is *Billy Gunn* so emotionally intense?

How many homes will *Debra* break up this year?

Who's the jabroni with the gray buzz cut?

What does it take to make *Chyna* smile? Never mind!

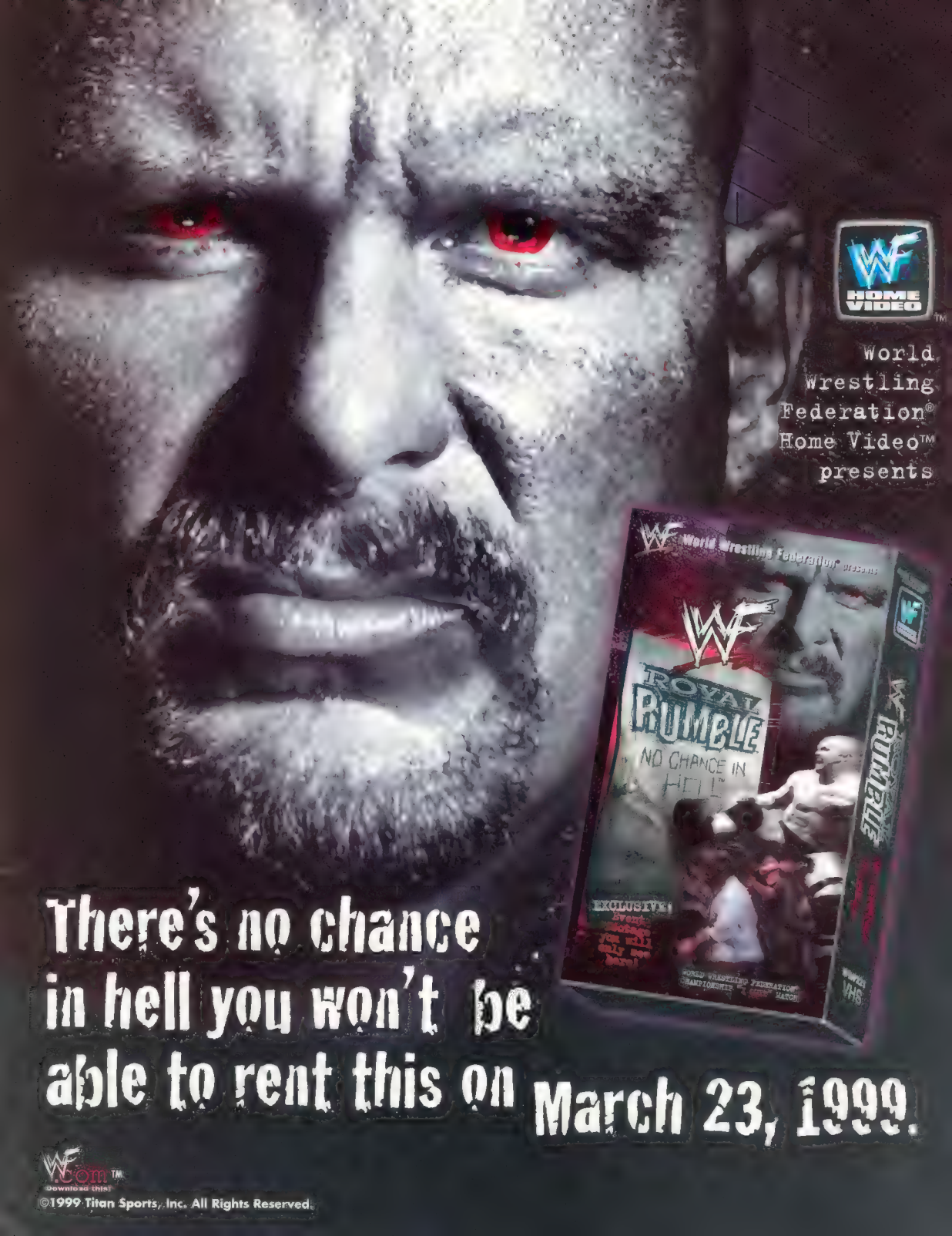
Look for *Too Much* to become tag team champions by the end of this century, thanks to *D.O.A.*!

Wouldn't it be great to have *Mankind* as your next-door neighbor? What a helluva good guy!

Again, thanks for the cards, e-mails, faxes and signs on television on my behalf. World Wrestling Federation fans are a special group. Thanks!

J.R.

"Goin' my way?!"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Aiming and Firing:

Steve Austin's Passion For Hunting

by keith elliot greenberg

THE IMAGE OF STEVE AUSTIN trudging through the south Texas wilderness with a rifle in his hands is a bit disturbing to some people.

This is the Rattlesnake—a man who regularly beats up his boss and once poured cement into Vince McMahon's Corvette convertible, delivered a Stone Cold Stunner to D'Lo Brown on top of a pickup truck and buried the Undertaker alive in a grave. Fans saw Austin brandish a toy gun, point it at McMahon's head and pull the trigger. Fortunately, Stone Cold was playing his version of a practical joke—the weapon wasn't real.

When Austin hunts near his home, he takes on a far less imposing disposition. His goal is no different from that of Native Americans who once roamed the same paths and the pioneers who followed after them—searching for food. He shoots to kill and kills to eat, while never inflicting the kind of savagery on his prey that his opponents in the World Wrestling Federation suffer.

While he may raise hell in the ring, Steve Austin is a responsible hunter who respects the sport of hunting.

(Above) In addition to his collection of firearms, Austin is also a skilled marksman with a bow and arrow. (Right) His message to those who would outlaw hunting—find another cause! The Rattlesnake doesn't consider himself an activist, but he simply believes in the Second Amendment.

"I might be Stone Cold Steve Austin," he concedes (his voice throaty but calm, his eyes focused but not menacing). "... [B]ut I'm not a jerk in the woods with a gun, raising hell. When I have a gun or a bow in my hands, I'm a different kind of person."

When asked to elaborate, he succinctly responds, "I'm responsible."

A man who travels extensively—making personal appearances, doing interviews and shaking hands with an eclectic mixture of humanity—Austin understands that there exists a contingent of people who view his pastime as barbaric. Incredibly, he doesn't become unhinged when the opinions of those opposed to hunting are offered to him. But he does express an opinion of his own.

"A lot of these animal rights activists will drive through a fast food restaurant, and order a hamburger," he says. "You ever see the way those animals are killed? It's pretty awful. I'd say the animals I hunt die in a much more humane way. I'm never trying to hurt the animal. I just want to get a clean kill."

When presented with the argument that hunting is a brutal way to spend a day off, Austin raises his voice slightly. "Brutal? What's brutal about it?"

Again, he refrains from launching into a diatribe. After a moment, his nerves calm and he continues evenly, "I really don't consider hunting brutal. To me, brutal would be taking a baseball bat and bludgeoning a deer across the head. That's sadistic. But that has nothing to do with hunting."

In fact, Austin says he has nothing against vegetarians. He doesn't regard them as wimps, and harbors no desire to wait outside the health food store and pummel them.

"If someone's a vegetarian, that's fine," he offers. "They should live their life, and believe what they want to. But I have the same right. I like hunting. It's the way I grew up."

In the small town of Edna, Texas, where Austin spent his early years, everyone he knew looked forward to hunting season. The Rattlesnake's family were no different. Steve's father, an insurance salesman, and three brothers—today one is a builder, one a construction worker and one is a member of the Coast Guard—enjoyed going into the woods in search of game. Even Steve's sister, a nurse, appreciated hunting.

When he was about 12 years old, the future World Wrestling Federation Champion began accompanying his father on hunting excursions. Initially, he targeted birds with a small, single-action shotgun.

"The first thing I ever shot was a dove," he says. "It was no big deal. Shoot a bird, pull the feathers off, clean him and eat him."

About a year later, Steve's father handed him a .22-250-caliber rifle, and told him they were gunning for deer.

"We were riding along in the truck, and I saw one," Austin recounts. "The deer was standing on a hill, about 70 yards away. I put my rifle on the mirror—using it as a rest—and pulled the trigger. It wasn't anything spectacular. I was doing what I came out there to do and was proud I made a good shot.

"I never saw anything cruel about it. It's not like you're leaving the animal lying in the damn pasture, waiting for it to die. If you kill something, you eat it."

Today, in the Austin household, he's the official cook for barbecue and wild game.

"For the last three days at my house, we had deer meat, and I cooked everything," he boasts.

Among the family's meals: ground deer meat on spaghetti and chili, stew and deer jerky. Austin still hunts with his father, along with a group of friends. For a man who has one of the most recognizable faces in the world, the entire experience is a welcome retreat.

"You get out there and kick back," Austin explains. "For three or four days, you can forget about the plane you have to catch, or the match you have coming up. When the hunt is over, all that stuff rushes back. But when I'm hunting, I'm able to block it all out."

Before he returns to the road, Austin locks up his guns in a place off-limits to his children. "Accidents happen," he says. "And you can never be too careful. But I don't think you're going to be reading about any tragedies in my house because my guns are never going to be in my kids' hands."

That is unless they decide to become hunters themselves. But even then, Austin insists that he'd make them take the appropriate gun safety classes, and keep a watchful eye during their first few hunts.

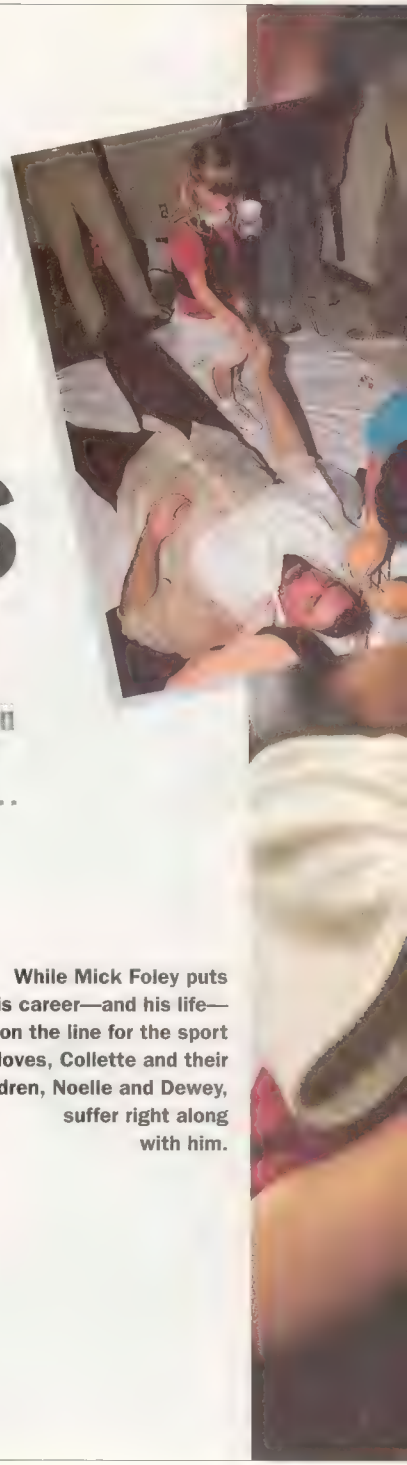
"Hey, if they want to go to the deer stand with me, that's great," he says. "I'll show them everything I know about hunting and hunting safety. But if they don't like hunting, that's fine, too. I'm not here to push my will on anyone else."

To those who want to outlaw hunting and other forms of legal gun play Austin has a clear message: Find another cause.

"Anyone who wants to kill someone with a gun will find a way to do it," he contends. "It's like drugs. If people want it, the law doesn't really stand in their way. Sure, bad things happen with guns. But we deserve the right to bear arms.

"I'm not an activist. I just believe in freedom of choice. The side of me you see in the World Wrestling Federation is a little bit out there. But my parents did a damn good job of raising me, and I know the difference between right and wrong. As far as I'm concerned, if there's something you really love to do and you're not a fanatic, there's nothing wrong with it." ■

Married to the Business



Remember *Rocky*? Adrian sat in the locker room while her man went out and got his brains beaten in by Apollo Creed. Sure, he said "Yo, Adrian! I did it!" They hugged, kissed, got married, blah, blah, blah...

BY KEVIN KELLY

THAT WAS THE MOVIES. FICTION. REALITY IS COLLETTE Foley, wife of Mick Foley, who has lived through horror over and over again. Al Snow's wife, Pam, knows lean times, flirtations with success, bitter disappointments as well as injuries.

Being married to a Federation Superstar certainly has a high cost. Not only are husbands taken away from home when they go on the road, there is the fear that they may not come back in one piece... or even able to walk.

The fear is real, constant. A nagging feeling of nausea. The sense that there was one more thing to say before saying goodbye. I know because my wife and I talk about it all the time. But I am not risking my life in the ring. Add to the worries created by travel the nightly possibility of permanent injury and the wife of a Federation Superstar is always cautious and worried about what could happen. Waiting for the phone to ring and afraid when it does...

While Mick Foley puts his career—and his life—on the line for the sport he loves, Collette and their children, Noelle and Dewey, suffer right along with him.

Despite being obsessed with solidifying his legendary status as the "King of Hardcore", Mick Foley cares deeply for his family. When he's not ensuring his future as a cripple, Mick and his wife plan trips to Disney World for themselves and their two children. The family was on hand at the *Royal Rumble* this past January when Mick lost the Federation Championship, thanks to a barrage of chair shots and a significant loss of blood.

With her husband getting stitches after the match, Collette and her two young children tried to gather their composure. I asked how she was feeling. "SICK!" she answered. I just had my head bitten off by an angry wife of the business. Collette later apologized and under the circumstances, it was perfectly fine. Speaking to wwf.com cameras she tried to describe what she was feeling.

"Thank God he's walking and he's kind of coherent. But we're definitely pushing it. The last few Pay-Per-Views... the [1998] *King of the Ring*... we have really been pushing the envelope and I am scared to death for him."

Asked if retirement is around the corner, Collette replied, "I wish, but I know him and I don't think he sees that in the near future. I really wish I could have him home, have him healthy, have him walking like a 33-year-old man instead of an 80-year-old man. I wish, but I really don't see that."

It took Al Snow a long time to become successful. More than a decade in the business and Al had only become remotely known and anything but rich. His wife, Pam, had been married to the business all that time. With their two young children, times were hard.

Now, still not rich but at least successful, Al and Pam feel better about things than they did when he gave up his last fulltime job in 1990. Pam wondered if this would be a passing phase—this weekend wrestling thing—but when he gave up what she called a "normal life" to "not work anymore, not have a regular job," she and the family were in it for good.

As a true independent, Al had to hustle to get his own bookings. At the same time, he was running a wrestling school of his own.

"I remember his first session had one student," Pam recalls.

The school eventually softened the transition between a factory job and consistent bookings. Getting booked all over the country would mean more money, but more time away from home. All wives certainly understand the sacrifices that must be made. Pam said that the separation is the hardest part, but "his procrastination drives me absolutely crazy sometimes." (My wife says that I should explain why all men procrastinate and I will be sure to later.)

(Left) Al Snow's wife Pam sometimes feels like a single parent raising their children, Jacob and Brittany, while Al—going hardcore on Road Dogg (above)—is on the road. When he's not risking crippling injuries, Mick Foley (below) makes the most of his free time taking family vacations.

Every wife must love and hate the telephone. When you're married to the business and your loved one is a Federation Superstar, waiting by the phone becomes as commonplace as breathing. Did he get there safely? Is he hurt? Why hasn't he called? It's not easy sitting and waiting. Pam told me later that she sometimes feels like a single mother.

"When you go to a restaurant and you are sitting by yourself with two children, I think that most people think you must be raising two kids alone because you are sitting alone—you're eating alone. You sit there and you see families at the next table. There is a husband, a wife,

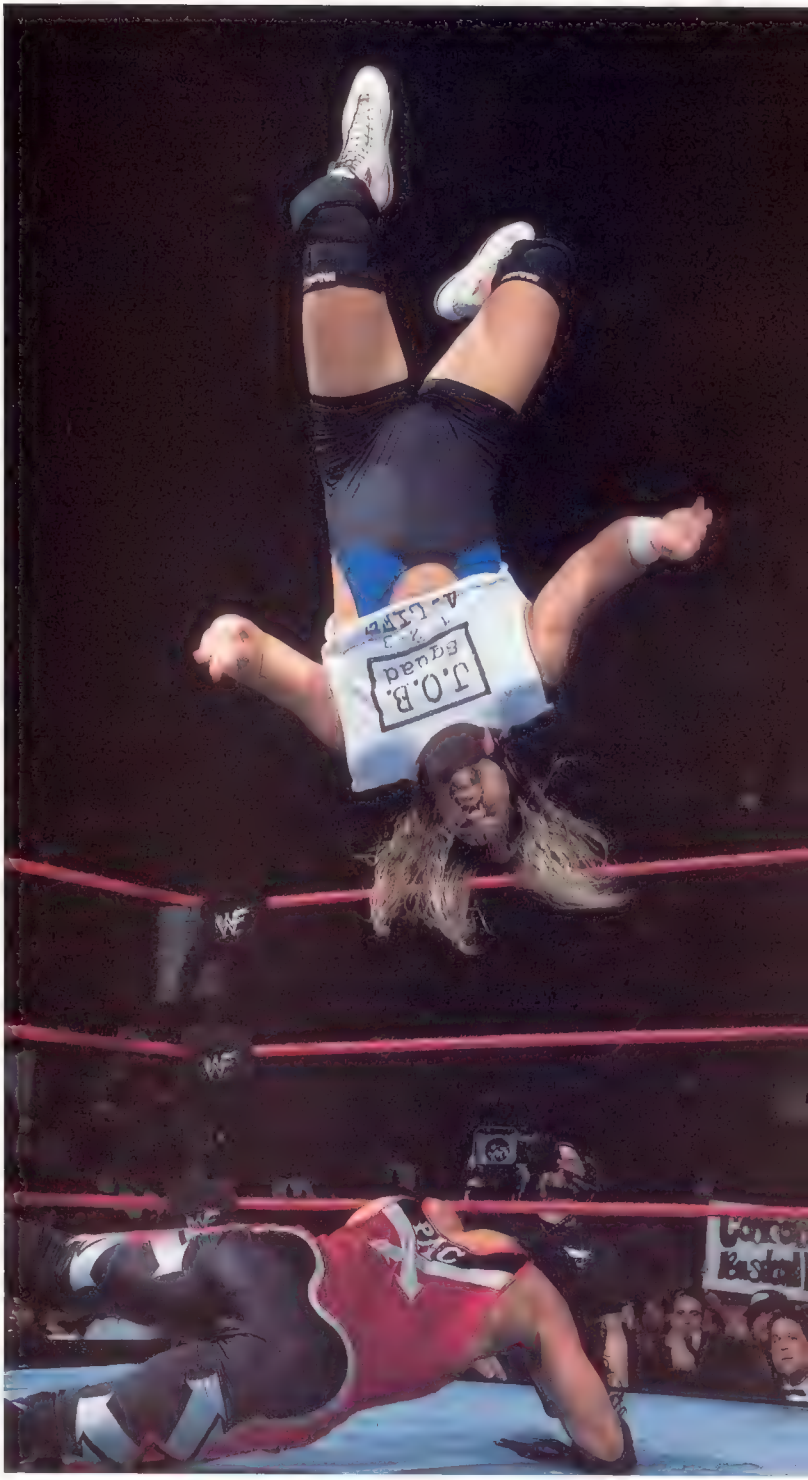
two kids... and you miss that little family thing."

The risk of injury is always there, too. Collette Foley worries how far Mick will go. Pam has seen husband Al come home beaten up from hardcore matches. It's a love-hate relationship with the business for those married to it. It makes their husbands so happy and, therefore, they are happy. But the toll it takes...

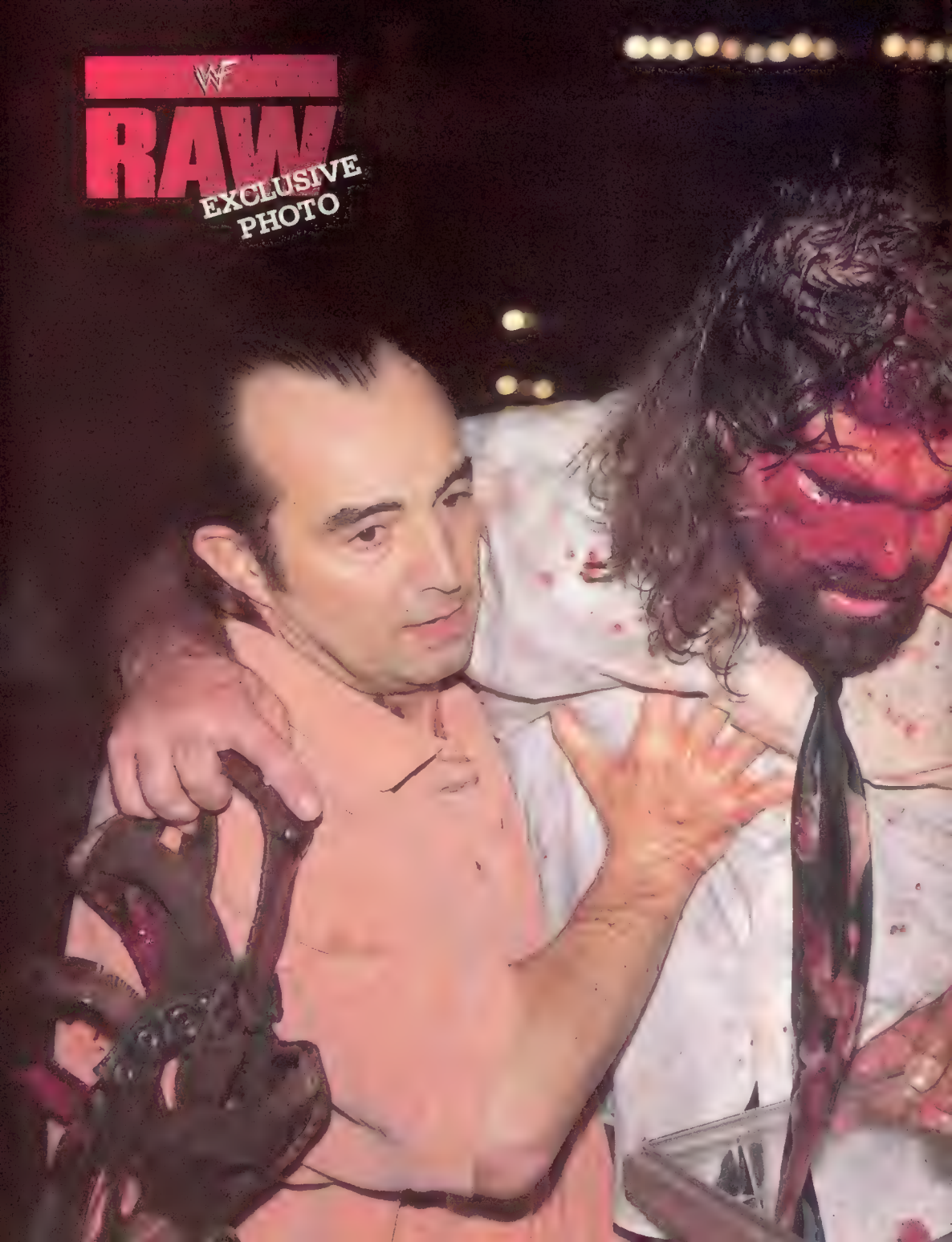
By the end of the *Rocky* series, Adrian begs her husband—punch-drunk and brain-damaged—to get out while he still can. She had been with him through triumph and tragedy and was now begging for it to end. That was fiction.

In fact all three wives said that just because they are married to the business, they can't tell their husbands to get out. They could, but it would fall on deaf ears. For those in the glow of the ring lights, there is no substitute and no bigger high... except for family. Each tries to balance life on the road, risking injury every night, and some semblance of a normal home life. Your definition of normal is probably different from Collette Foley's, who saw her husband bludgeoned into near-unconsciousness from a ringside seat. While Mick was being stitched up, their children wanted to make sure that Daddy was alright. Noelle gave him a Skittle while offering to wrestle him. Mick knew that the sight of his bloody face must be stressful. He ate the Skittle and asked that the match take place when they got home.

Mick still had seven shows in six days before he could answer his daughter's challenge. Collette quietly wiped away tears, perhaps wondering if that match would ever take place. ■



Collette Foley worries that her husband—assaulting the Big Boss Man (left)—could end up in a wheelchair. While Al Snow—moonsaulting X-Pac (right)—chased his dream, his family had to trust that he would make it.


WWF
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EXCLUSIVE
PHOTO

You'll Never Make Him Quit...

by Laura

Speaking with Sable...

GUYS, I know you've opened to this page just for the article...

Sable, the World Wrestling Federation Superstar, will grace the cover of the April issue of *Playboy* magazine, as well as be featured within. Quite an accomplishment—especially as the cover shot of Sable was personally selected by Hugh Hefner. Appearing in *Playboy* raises a myriad of issues—and questions this reporter was very curious to ask.

A professional model for six years and a superstar of the World Wrestling Federation for three, Sable is no stranger to the spotlight. There is a difference, however, between performing on television or modeling a product such as Pepsi-Cola or Guess jeans and posing in the nude for the most popular adult magazine.

"As a little girl growing up I had caught glimpses of *Playboy* and while I thought the women were so extremely beautiful, it was not a goal to which I aspired," stated the Federation Superstar. "Posing for *Playboy* was an endeavor that, as I got older, I never thought I would feel comfortable doing. But since I've made the decision, I am very proud that I have and I think that it is going to be something very positive for me, and the World Wrestling Federation.

"People that may not watch wrestling may tune in now just to see who this woman is and how she got to be where she is," Sable explained. "So, I think it's definitely going to help the [World Wrestling Federation] achieve more prominence, and myself as well. People who have posed for *Playboy*—especially women who have been featured on the cover... a lot of good things have happened to them. I have been presented with a lot of good opportunities before this *Playboy* issue ever came about, so I am hoping that when it does come out that even more opportunities are going to come my way. I also hope my fans will understand why I made the decision I did and will continue to support me."

When clarifying why Sable made the decision to pose for *Playboy*, the issue of the money arose.

"Well, the money definitely played a huge factor in my decision. That was one of the reasons I chose not to do it in the beginning. Then [*Playboy*] met my asking price. But more than the money, it has to do with more personal reasons. I'm very proud of who I am. I'm very proud of how hard I've worked on my body and I'm extremely confident in myself. I hope that's what people come away with after they see the magazine."

Perhaps some will, but this writer speculates that the majority of viewers will have other thoughts and images dancing through their minds. Let's face it, millions will soon see all of Sable—from strangers to family.

"Once you make the decision [to pose in the nude], it needs to be done without inhibition," Sable explained. "You have to set everything else aside once you make the decision to go ahead and do it. You've got to give it everything you have."

Photo Credit: Rich Freeda

Sable continued, "When I did the photo shoot it was not done in a perverse way. The thought in my mind was not oh, people are going to be looking at these pictures lusting after me. I was thinking how confident I was in myself to be able to stand there and the image I wanted to project in these pictures was a very proud, confident woman—someone who's not ashamed of who she is and who's very proud of the work that it took to get her where she is."

The issue of pornography spans the full spectrum of emotions—from sexual arousal to scorn to indifference—and individuals tend to have strong opinions about it, including Sable.

"I don't feel that there is anything wrong with pornography. I think that if you are a responsible adult and you are able to control your actions and reactions to it, then you have every right to watch it. But I think that if you watch pornography and start taking your aggressions out on another person, that is completely unacceptable. But I don't think that kind of behavior stems from the pornography, I think it stems from the chemical makeup of the individual who is acting upon that, that makes them behave that way. I don't believe viewing violent or sexual materials is going to create violent or sexual behaviors."

Sable's last comment touches on what many anti-pornography activists argue—that it promotes violence against women, which also raises the issues of censorship and Freedom of Speech. Are writers and producers accountable for the behavior of those who both engage in criminal behavior and view their publications or programming? How far does the First Amendment reach?

On the subject of censorship, Larry Flynt—the publisher of *Hustler* magazine who fought for the right to publish... for his First Amendment rights—naturally came up. Flynt has undeniably been a controversial figure not only because of the hardcore nature

of *Hustler*, but because of allegations of his perverse exploitation of women and young girls. Flynt has perpetually stood on the line of what is and *is not* acceptable, with one foot over the edge. Some might liken him to Vince McMahon...

"Larry Flynt revolutionized the sex industry. He's a brilliant man who made a new magazine to compete with *Playboy*, which was the first time it had ever been done. And I think that he made quite a name for himself and quite a magazine that is still very much sought after. It's not a magazine that I would choose to be in—it's not as classy or tasteful as *Playboy*—but Larry Flynt has every right to do whatever he feels he would like to do. It's the Freedom of Speech and I think he's a very smart man. I'm very glad to see that he stood and fought for himself and his right to publish any type of magazine that he wanted to be published without censorship."

A popular argument is that the entertainment industry—from fine art to advertising to pornography—has objectified women, exploiting their sexuality to make money. Does Sable subscribe to the notion that women in entertainment are perceived as objects and their sexuality is turned into a commodity?

"No, because every woman has a right to do what she wants to do. That's her own free will," Sable replied. "I think that sometimes the women that we see in magazines or in movies or on television may give you a false sense of who women really are. But I think that a woman who has her head on straight should not feel threatened in any way by that. I think a woman who is confident in herself and in her ability and knows who she is and where she's going should not be threatened in any way by an image she sees some other woman presenting. I don't think women should compare themselves to other women. I think women should be able to accept who they are and be happy with themselves."

The human body is a beautiful thing, especially the female body. It has been a central focus of the artist's palette, from the written word to sculpture to the Hollywood screen. And this admiration of the female form is universal and timeless. However, the question that is often raised in the admiration of the female body concerns its authenticity.

It is no secret that most women undergo some form of physical enhancement—from applying makeup and false fingernails to having breast augmentation or lyposuction to feel better about themselves or to conform to society's ideal of beauty. The question is, When a woman undergoes such modifications what kind of message does it send to women as well as society's perception of women?

"One way to sum it up is: Don't do it for anybody but yourself," Sable asserts. "If enhancing your breasts or having a nose job or coloring your hair makes you feel good about yourself, then do it. But if you're doing it because you're worried about what someone else is thinking about you it's just totally a wrong reason to do it."

Sable continued, "But if it makes you feel more confident, and makes you happy with who you are and more accepting of who you are, then by all means do whatever it takes. I'm all for doing whatever it takes to make yourself young and beautiful and vital and healthy. I don't think there's any difference in taking vitamins to stay young and healthy, or working out or having some plastic surgery done. I would like to say that the only enhancement I have ever had was to have my breasts done. A lot of people seem to think I've had so many other things done and in some ways that's flattering, but in other ways it's very annoying because I haven't. I've never felt the need to defend myself against that.

Not everyone is going to like me or like the decisions I make, but I make them for me and not for them," Sable concluded.

When asked what's the one message she hoped her *Playboy* pictorial would get across, Sable responded, "I hope other women can gain from me a sense of what constitutes a healthy and strong woman. If any woman could look at me and think: 'Wow, this woman's very confident, she likes who she is, she knows where she wants to go, she works out and stays active so that she can be young and healthy', then that's great. I aspire to be that kind of an influence. That is the image I would like to portray to other people." ■

Courtesy *Playboy* magazine. © 1999 by Playboy. Photography by Arny Freytag

the birth of a title.
THE H
CHAMPI

It began as a joke, a gag gift to Mankind. It has become a symbol of pride and toughness. The Hardcore Championship isn't a joke anymore. The men who have battled for this battered title have all earned respect from each other, with broken tables and bent chairs littering the landscape like the aftermath of a tornado in a mobile home park. Twisted wreckage has not been limited to the ring either. These matches have broken barriers, as the action has taken us seemingly everywhere.

It's brutal... it's Hardcore!

ARDCORE
ONSHIP

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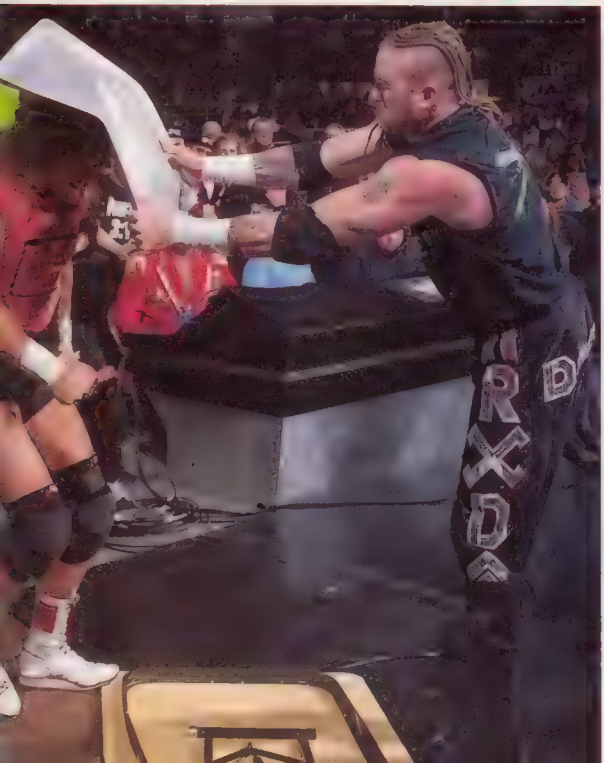
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HARDCORE

they love this game

by bill banks

the setting is the NFC Divisional Playoff Game between the Minnesota Vikings and the Arizona Cardinals on January 10, 1999, at the Metrodome in Minneapolis. During the contest, some familiar riffs from Stone Cold Steve Austin's entrance music shake the

Photo Credit: Archive Photos

(Above) Jerome Bettis, star running back for the Pittsburgh Steelers, once challenged his father to a wrestling match! (Top right) Former world champion boxer Thomas Hearns has been a long-time fan of the World Wrestling Federation, while L.A. Lakers' forward Robert Horry (below)—a huge fan of The Rock—showed up unannounced at a Houston, Texas, *RAW* last year.

foundation of the building, sending thousands of fans into a frenzy. The theme has been one of the best motivational tools for the Vikings all year long, especially for team spark plug John Randle, who just happens to be an enormous fan of the Texas Rattlesnake.

The defense gets jacked, and stops opposing quarterback Jake Plummer on the next two series to build a 14-0 lead. Last October, Randle was featured on ESPN's *SportsCenter* working out in one of Steve Austin's T-shirts. One month later, in an interview in the November 30, 1998, issue of *ESPN Magazine*, the all-pro told Dan Patrick that he would one day like to team with Stone Cold to take on the Carolina Panthers' Kevin Greene and San Francisco 49ers' Kevin Gogan.

A few weeks prior, in the November 2 issue of *ESPN*, Pittsburgh Steelers' running back, Jerome "The Bus" Bettis, told Patrick, "When I was 14 or 15, the World Wrestling Federation was really big, so I challenged my father to a wrestling match. I told everybody in the neighborhood. The match lasted five seconds. He threw me on my head so quick I didn't realize we'd even started."

Every day, it's becoming increasingly hip for athletes outside the World Wrestling Federation spotlight to show off their love of sports-entertainment… and the list keeps growing! Like Bettis, many professional athletes enjoyed the World Wrestling Federation as youths and continue to do so into adulthood. Just like other Federation fans these stars grew up watching it on television, wrestling in backyards and attending live events. Stripped of their own accomplishments and fan followings, they can still tell you about the Federation Superstars of yesteryear who battled it out on Saturday morning television.

"I grew up watching guys like the Junkyard Dog, Ivan Putski, Bob Backlund and Tony Atlas," said star forward for the New Jersey Nets, Jayson Williams, when contacted by *Raw Magazine* for this article.

"As far as today, I enjoy watching Mankind, The Rock, Stone Cold and D'Lo Brown," Williams continued. "I met them all at *SummerSlam* [in 1997] at the Meadowlands. My love of the Federation is a lot like the way the fans have treated me in New Jersey. They've watched me grow up and have supported me. That's why I'm so loyal to the Federation. It's the same thing."

Other athletes who have followed sports-entertainment since childhood include "Iron" Mike Tyson, who fulfilled a childhood dream when he took part in *WrestleMania* XIV; and Seattle Seahawks linebacker Cortez Kennedy attended the University of Miami with The Rock.

"I love the Federation and have a lot of respect for it," Kennedy told wwf.com when he appeared at a Tacoma, Washington, *Raw* last December 10, decked out in "Austin 3:16" paraphernalia.

"Growing up as a kid, I was a huge fan of Jerry 'The King' Lawler. Hopefully in a few years I'll get the chance to wrestle," Kennedy added.

Many of these athletes can also relate to the same hectic road schedule of the Federation Superstars. During their respective off-seasons players are able to watch the World Wrestling Federation, which doesn't allow for such a breather. How do they keep up with it when they're in the full swing of their game, living out of hotels and arenas?

According to Jayson Williams, it's a matter of making the time. He catches up on World Wrestling Federation programming when he's home between contests, often watching with his girlfriend or fellow Net forward Keith Van Horn—who, Williams says, "is getting into it after I talked him into watching it once."

Los Angeles Lakers' forward Robert Horry and Detroit Red Wings' toughman Darren McCarty make it a point to attend live events every time the World Wrestling Federation tour comes to their hometowns. McCarty, a friend of Dan Severn, and more than a dozen of his teammates, including defensive player Matt Dandenault, can be spotted regularly in the audiences during Detroit or Grand Rapids, Michigan, live events. Horry is likewise a constant at Houston, Texas, events and is a diehard fan of The Rock.

"I love it when The Rock's music starts and then he raises the eyebrow and *lays the smack down* on someone's *candy ass*," Horry told wwf.com last November.

"The NBA loves wrestling. You look out in the crowd and you'll always see some NBA guys. We all respect what the superstars do in the ring."

Not only does the Federation afford these players the opportunity to relive

Nets' star Jayson Williams—here schooling Dennis Rodman and Michael Jordan in the fine art of the dunk—told *Raw Magazine* that he looks forward to someday stepping foot in the ring. (Right) Thanks to a friendship with Dan Severn many of the Detroit Red Wings became diehard Federation fans.

their childhoods, and at the same time gives them a creative outlet they don't always have the time to express in their careers. Just like millions of fans, these athletes can live vicariously through their favorite Federation Superstars.

For example: imagine a seven-foot, 315-pound NBA team center taking it to the hole on an opposing player. After slamming the ball through the net, he turns to the defender, grabs him by the neck a la Latrell Sprewell, and chokeslams him down to the hardwood! If Shaquille O'Neal had his way that play would be a part of the Lakers' strategy. Shaq, who appeared alongside teammate Horry at a *Raw* event last November 2 in Houston, uses the World Wrestling Federation "Attitude" and its entertainment value as motivation on the court.

"I'm a huge Undertaker fan, and I consider myself the Undertaker of the NBA," Shaq told wwf.com that night.

"Someday, I'm gonna start choke-slamming guys when they come down the lane to make the Undertaker proud. I'll take the fine, miss a game and come back and do it again!"

Some pro athletes, such as McCarty who met Dan Severn through a mutual friend, are lucky enough to know a Federation Superstar personally. The Red Wing has even taken part in several Michigan independent wrestling promotions in support of the McCarty Cancer Foundation. Other professional athletes with ties to Federation Superstars include Baltimore Ravens' lineman Ray Lewis, another teammate of The Rock's on the University of Miami Hurricanes football team. According to Lewis, who attended a November 30, 1998, *Raw* in Baltimore, Maryland, with many other Ravens linemen, it was the crown jewel of Team Corporate who kept his head on straight when he came into Miami as a freshman.

"When I saw The Rock here [at *Raw*], he and I reminisced about our college days together," Lewis said, in an interview with wwf.com. "Back then, The Rock was quiet… he and [Tampa Bay Buccaneers all-pro] Warren Sapp looked out for me so much. I told [The Rock] that I see him more on television now than he sees me."

Like other fans, many of these athletes have dreams of one day competing in the ring alongside their favorite World Wrestling Federation Superstars. In recent months, several top pro athletes have contacted Titan Sports in Stamford, Connecticut, to inquire about the possibility of stepping foot in the squared circle. There's a big difference between being a Federation fan and actually competing with the superstars, however. But for some athletes, like Jayson Williams, there's nothing wrong with following a dream.

"Me and [Anthony] Mason [Charlotte Hornets' forward] wouldn't mind wrestling Karl Malone someday," says Williams. "When I go to the live events, I always wish we had that same type of atmosphere in the NBA. It's something else. I guarantee every time me and Mason see each other, the first thing out of his mouth is something about the Federation."

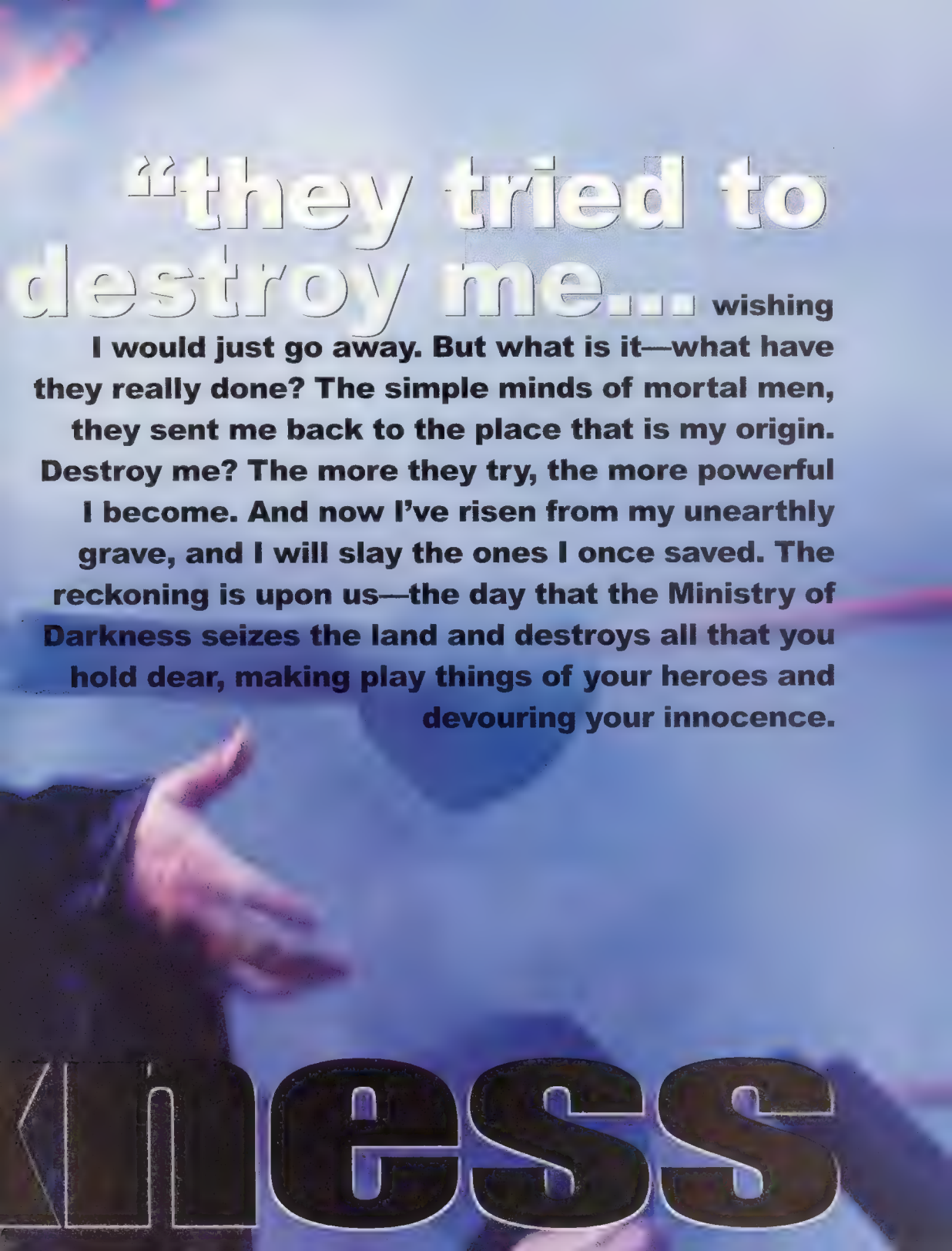
The list of athletes who are also World Wrestling Federation fans reads like a *Who's Who of Professional Sports*. Some of the names topping the list include Dallas Cowboys' defensive lineman Larry Allen and cornerback Kevin Mathis—both of whom waited backstage during a Dallas, Texas, *Raw* on November 3, 1998, to meet Stone Cold Steve Austin; the Philadelphia Flyers' John LeClair; future baseball Hall of Famer Wade Boggs; and former world champion boxers Michael Moorer and Thomas Hearns. It just goes to show that the biggest showmen in all sports really do "love this game"!

By the way... John Randle and the rest of the Minnesota Vikings beat the Arizona Cardinals 41-21. ■

by bill banks

total Dark

"they tried to destroy me... wishing I would just go away. But what is it—what have they really done? The simple minds of mortal men, they sent me back to the place that is my origin. Destroy me? The more they try, the more powerful I become. And now I've risen from my unearthly grave, and I will slay the ones I once saved. The reckoning is upon us—the day that the Ministry of Darkness seizes the land and destroys all that you hold dear, making play things of your heroes and devouring your innocence.



THE PLAGUE OF DARKNESS IS COMING... an all-encompassing evil from which there is no escape, no mercy, no hope. It's called the future... and in the future I will look down upon thee, and I will decide whether you are an agent of darkness or just kindling for my fires. The power of darkness shall only be offered to a chosen few, and those who resist the temptations of my Ministry... pain becomes synonymous with punishment. Embrace the darkness, and relish in the unearthly delight pain has to offer. Resist and there are no limits to the pain you subject yourself to. Don't fight it... it will tear your soul apart. For I am

the reaper of men, the changer of souls, the weaver of nightmares... and I am the heart of darkness. Am I now and ever will be the purity of evil. The hell you were threatened with is no longer an option. It is a reality... a living breathing reality, and you are all right in the middle of it. Yes, hell has relocated to earth."

—The Undertaker, unveiling the Ministry of Darkness on the January 11 *RAW* from Houston, Texas.

by **bill banks**

the student be
the teache

comes

"That kid's done a lot of growing up."

I won't name names, but one of my co-workers offered that comment recently following a phone interview with Shawn Michaels for wwf.com concerning his new wrestling school. Just about a month after back surgery to fuse several of his vertebrae, my colleague said, the Heartbreak Kid sounded like "a new man."

For some of his peers, it was a long time in the making for the superstar who once lived in and out of the squared circle with reckless abandon. Part of the reason for his new attitude has to be that Michaels is finally pain free for the first time in years. Despite the fact that he may be physically unable to compete at his previous superhuman level, history will still regard him as one of the greatest performers in the history of the sport.

But in case you were wondering, Shawn still doesn't lie down for anyone or anything, even during his absence from the ring. Lesser athletes would call it a career and wallow in self-pity, but the show must go on for the "Showstoppa". Now, he's ready to embark on a new journey... one which will transform him from the student into the teacher.

This April, the doors officially opened for the Shawn Michaels Wrestling Academy in San Antonio, Texas. It's a joint venture between Michaels and his former mentor, Jose Lothario, offering the chance for future wrestlers to train with two of the best in this business. It's a familiar situation to Shawn, who began his career in the early 1980s much the same way by walking into Lothario's office and asking for an opportunity.

A bond developed between the two, which has been documented on numerous occasions in *RAW Magazine* as well as on World Wrestling Federation programming. When Michaels started working in the independents, Lothario was by his side. On the eve of the biggest match of his career at *WrestleMania* XII, it was Lothario who trained him for the "Iron Man" match. And when HBK made his San Antonio homecoming at the 1997 *Royal Rumble* in front of more than 62,000 fans, the teacher was right there alongside the student.

Becoming "the Showstoppa, the main event, the icon" came at a high price. Shawn is the first to admit that going full throttle down the Federation highway will eventually lead to a crash, which is exactly what happened. Many of the veterans of the business told him to slow down, both in the ring and out of it, but HBK didn't hear it. His condition was worsened at the 1998 *Royal Rumble* when during a bout with the Undertaker, HBK slammed his back into the hardwood casket. In the months that followed, his injuries

progressed to the point where even rest wasn't healing.

Shawn eventually had no choice but to elect surgery, potentially cutting short a legendary career which might have enjoyed several more title reigns. Whether he will attempt a comeback one day is a decision only Shawn can make. This type of surgery in which the vertebrae are fused leaves the spine little flexibility. If HBK attempted to lace up the boots once again, he might shatter the fuse and risk permanent paralysis.

As it turned out, Shawn's condition—and his outlook—improved tremendously after the surgery. Within a month he was already taking part in swimming exercises and light aerobics, and as of this writing he is awaiting doctors' permission to begin weight training. The pain is gone, as is the pressure—in his spine as well as to perform in his role in the Federation. No longer does Shawn have to feel he's carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders. Stone Cold, The Rock, Mick Foley and Triple H have more than successfully carried the torch the Heartbreak Kid passed to them.

Despite the setback, there is life after wrestling for the Heartbreak Kid. Settling down and even marriage are possible options on his horizon. But once the sport is in the blood, it never goes away. With gratitude for the opportunity Jose Lothario granted him 17 years ago, Michaels was ready to give back to the sport he loved. Like "Grasshopper" finally snatching the stone from the *Kung Fu* master's hand, he now possesses the necessary skills to share his knowledge with others.

"I'm encouraged by the whole experience because I think I have something to offer as a teacher," Shawn told *Raw Magazine* recently. "It's a great way for me to live vicariously through the students. If I can't go out there and be the 'Showstoppa', maybe I can find the next Shawn Michaels who can."

For athletes looking to break into the sport, Shawn's school offers a rare opportunity to train under a former World Wrestling Federation Champion. How many other institutions can claim that? Often in this business newcomers fall victims to being educated by someone who isn't qualified. There are hundreds of wrestling schools, but frankly some are jokes. When the biggest accomplishment a teacher boasts is having once been a champion in some small independent promotion in Oshkosh, Wisconsin... well, you get what you pay for.

After graduating from a wrestling school, many potential wrestlers are on their own when it comes to booking themselves on cards across the country. Students at Shawn's academy will have the opportunity to take part in on-the-job training, as Shawn and Jose's "Texas Wrestling Alliance" holds independent cards throughout the Lone Star State.

Joining Shawn and Jose as trainers at the academy, which will be based out of San Antonio, Texas, are Rudy Gonzalez and veteran "Mad Dog" Ken Johnson, who helped "Super Sock" train HBK in the early '80s. The site of the new school is the facility where Lothario trained his student for his *WrestleMania* XII bout, which has undergone major renovations in preparation for classes. Students will have the option of either a full-time three-month course or a part-time six-month course. Already one of Shawn's prize pupils is Pete Lothario, his mentor's son.

"I think Pete has a lot of ability—obviously it runs in the family," Shawn said. "It may sound flattering, but I see him mimicking a lot of my moves. He has two very good teachers, and the best part is that he's quiet and listens to what we ask of him."

How fitting that HBK will now have the opportunity to alert the eager, younger Lothario about the risks of reckless abandon in the ring... a lesson the teacher will be more than happy to recite to his students. ■

For more information on how to become a student of the Shawn Michaels Wrestling Academy, call 1-900-32-TRAIN, or send name and address to:
The Shawn Michaels Wrestling Academy
P.O. Box 461348
San Antonio, TX 78249-1348
(Include $5.00 for postage and handling.)

"I CAN'T TURN IT ON AND OFF"

Blurring the Lines of Reality

by *kevin kelly*

Badd Ass Billy Gunn is one of the most charismatic and colorful personalities in the World Wrestling Federation. His on-air character is an extension of himself. Whether the red light is on or off, Billy Gunn is "Mr. Ass". It shouldn't be surprising that some of his co-workers, his fellow Federation Superstars, get a little aggravated by it.

The modern face of the Federation is molded by a blend of fantasy and reality. The story lines and events take viewers beyond the limits of their imaginations, swerving and curving along the way. Sure, it's nontraditional! Just as the writing has evolved, so has character development.

Nowadays, characters are usually based on the personalities of the superstars, and their experiences and lives outside the ring. Is the Godfather a real pimp? You're damn right he is and proud of it. While his may not be a suitable business for membership in the local Chamber of Commerce, at least it deserves credit for longevity. As far as his character is concerned, the Godfather is always smiling because Charles Wright is who he is. He makes no excuses for it and he's having fun. That enjoyment in his work translates to the audience who smile right back at him.

There are many other examples of reality-based characters in the Federation roster. Mark Henry, for example, writes poetry and tries to woo the ladies every chance he gets. Like the lightbulb in the refrigerator, when the door is open "Sexual Chocolate" is turned on.

How does Billy Gunn separate "Mr. Ass" from the husband and father of two he is at home?

"I don't know. My wife asks me that all the time. It's hard for me because I am in my character more than I am in my home character. You bring a lot of that stuff home with you and it causes a lot of conflict," Billy reveals.

It apparently causes some friction in the Federation locker room as well. The word is that Badd Ass Billy Gunn isn't number one on the popularity chart. That's fine with him, however. It seems his ego thrives on the conflict. Whether it's challenging The Rock to a foot race outside a gym or daring anyone to beat him at basketball, "Mr. Ass" and his ego truly are inseparable.

While Darren Drozdov was in the NFL, he saw egos mainly among the skill position players. But the padding worn in football to protect themselves from injury also insulates and hides true personalities from the outside world.

"People don't get to see you for who you really are," says Droz.

He added that because people get to see the superstar's face, many "get caught up in their gimmick here and they don't know how to separate it. They think they are 'Mr. Tough Guy' and they act like a total asshole sometimes. They think they are above the world sometimes. You don't get a lot of guys like that but some are."

The popularity, the adulation from the fans make an enticing cocktail with potent effects.

How do you separate the lunatic from Luna? Good luck. Her insanity is

Billy Gunn—getting ready to drop Val Venis (left)—is more comfortable in his "character" as he spends more time in than out of the persona. Outside of the Federation spotlight, Luna—here choking Sable—is even more Luna in her daily life than before a match.

what keeps her sane. Her unbalanced view of an unbalanced world seems to even out.

"There's only a hairline in between genius and insanity," offered Luna, who certainly cannot mask who she is with her unique hairstyle and tattoos. Luna is who she is. The same rabid mood swings you see on television are part of her daily life. Those who live life with her deal with them as well.

"When I go to the grocery store, I am perhaps more 'Luna' than before a match because I am concentrating mainly on the match. At the store, I'm sort of swinging from the shelves and throwing things into my basket," the superstar added.

Imagine what she's like on double coupon days!

Val Venis' character is diverse because of his political beliefs. As was reported in the March issue of the *Raw Magazine*, he is a fiscal conservative with strong right-wing allegiances. With the "religious right" shaping much of the perceptions of the current Republican party, Val's views portray a different side of his life—a unique diversion from his on-camera appearance, seemingly in direct contrast to his in-ring persona.

While it would be hard to imagine Val being Val while he discusses fiscal policy, "Mr. Ass" is "Mr. Ass" all the time, as we learned earlier. His somewhat obnoxious character ticks off his wife, but of course she loves him anyway. Do his co-workers share that same sentiment for "Mr. Ass"?

"Maybe some of the guys don't like it. Maybe some of them do. But it really doesn't matter. That is what I do, what I do for a living. If you are as good at something and want to be as much of a perfectionist as I am... I am more or less just staying that way for everybody. So, everybody goes 'Jesus! He really is that guy!'"

Even though Billy Gunn was a rodeo cowboy at one time in his life, he never felt that the Smoking Gunns had crossed over to real acceptance.

Perhaps no Federation Superstar has more fun with his persona than Charles Wright—because the Godfather character is a way of life for the Las Vegas resident.

"People knew who they were, but they were never 'over'. And, of course, the 'Rockabilly' thing never even got off the ground. That was ridiculous, the stupidest thing I had ever seen. Now, they let me play and be in my own character. See what happens?" Gunn explained.

When "Mr. Ass" becomes a little too much to take, some in the locker room are quick to remind Billy about his days as "Rockabilly". Gunn may pause for a second, showing slightly the effects of a painful shot, but then he is quickly back in the saddle as "Mr. Ass".

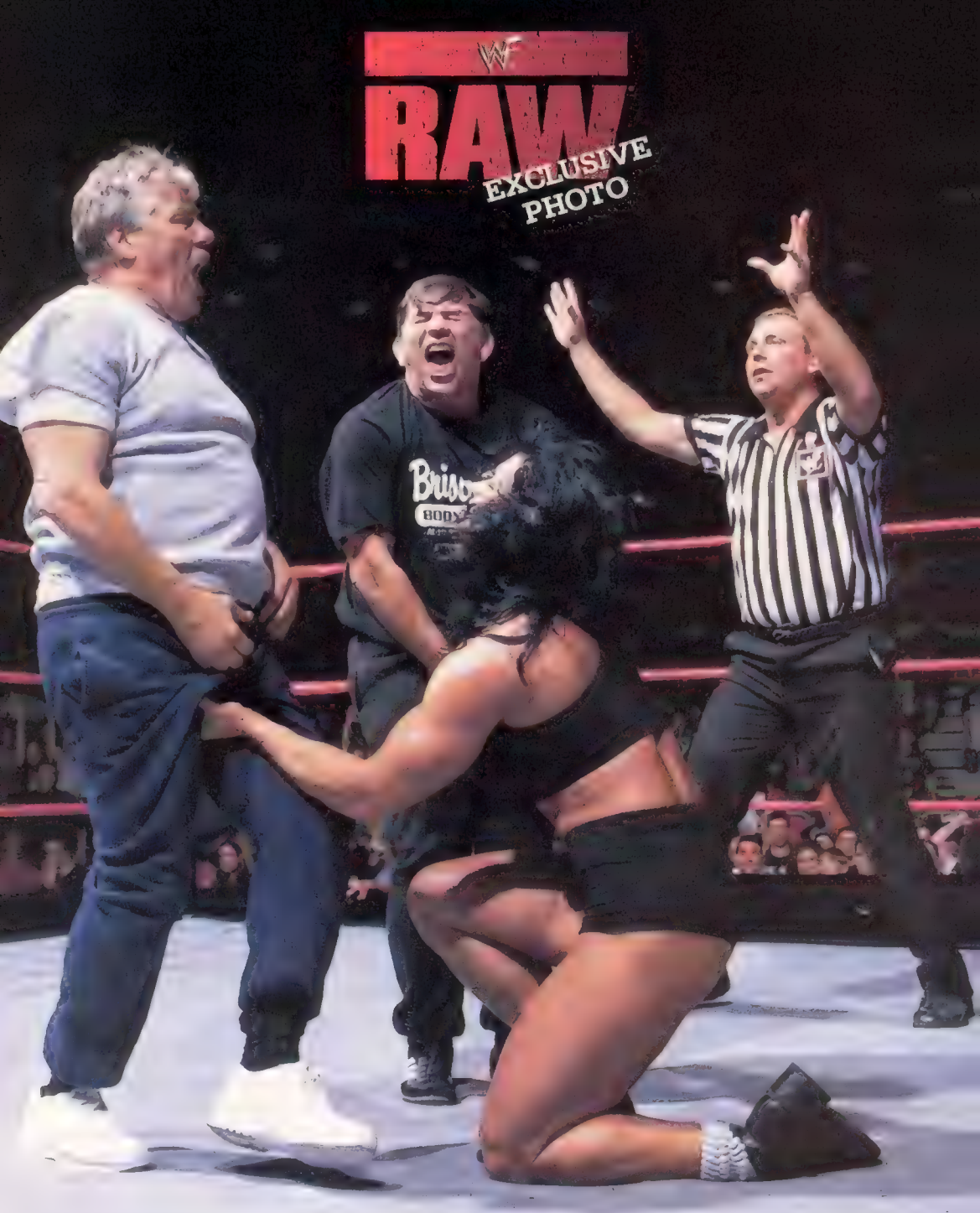
History points to Bret Hart as someone who lived his gimmick to the point of disbelief. The former Federation Champion had his infamous breakup with Vince McMahon, many say, because of Hart's ego. The fact is that the Hit Man had become a part of Bret's life to the point where fantasy and reality blurred together. He lost that sense of what was real and everyone paid for it. That was the true tragedy.

Was there a difference between the Heartbreak Kid and Shawn Michaels? His cockiness rubbed many people the wrong way and he also developed an air of invincibility on his way to the top. Perhaps part of the reason Bret and Shawn clashed is because each was so engrossed in his own character and what he represented that they couldn't help being adversarial. Perhaps it was because they were much alike…

Whether it's Luna, who finds the line between sanity and insanity vague, or Droz, who simply looks forward to removing himself from fans' adulation and society altogether once the match is over, every Federation Superstar brings something of themselves to their characters. Some believe that they are merely actors playing a part while some are who they are in and out of the ring. Most are a blend of both.

There is something to be said for living a gimmick and the level of success which can be achieved. The more "real" the character, the more "over" they will be with the fans. Even an unbelievable character can be bought into if the performer "is" that persona.

Billy Gunn can't help but be "Mr. Ass". When he was a cowboy and a goofy singer, he was "Mr. Ass". When he was a multisport star in high school, he was "Mr. Ass". Don't ever refer to his wife as "Mrs. Ass", however! Just because they share the same last name, rest assured that there is only one "Mr. Ass"… and the other Federation Superstars can barely tolerate that one. ■



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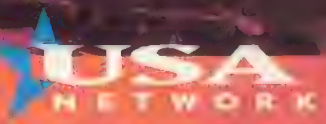


By Dennis A. Brent

There have been many critics of Vince McMahon and the wild antics of the World Wrestling Federation over the years. Today's jabs at the Federation are nothing new.

Ask Th

Vince McMahon has always gone against what the critics deem "appropriate". This is what the wrestling entertainment business has ALWAYS been about—arousing people's emotions. It's show business.

During the Persian Gulf War in 1991, Vince McMahon went against public opinion by showcasing the turn of Sgt. Slaughter against the United States. The World Wrestling Federation, and Vince McMahon himself, received a lot of criticism for this story line, but he went forward to the conclusion where "good" eventually overcomes "evil". It was entertainment on the grandest scale.

Despite the continued success of the World Wrestling Federation, nothing has changed as far as Vince McMahon's critics are concerned—they still knock him no matter how successful the programs are. Vince McMahon had the vision to create wrestling-based sports-entertainment that brings this business into the next millennium. The old *rasslin'* days with 60-minute matches and lots of rest-holds are passé and not desired by today's audience. The fans today want things to move FAST, with lots of action and to be "cool". Vince and his creative team, along with the greatest talent roster of superstar

he Fans

athletes in the world, create entertaining television and arena shows 52 weeks a year with no reruns. The ratings each week are higher and higher, with millions of new viewers watching all over the world. The success of the World Wrestling Federation has transcended the wrestling ring, with successful entries into the worlds of music, videotapes, publishing, wearing apparel, action figures and video games.

One of the more recent attacks on the World Wrestling Federation occurred when *USA Today* elected to publish a letter "from a fan" on its editorial page in the January 4, 1999, issue. For a variety of reasons, there is speculation that the letter was "planted" in *USA Today*, but in any event Vince McMahon chose to publicly respond to the purported critic. His response was also printed in *USA Today* a few days later for the world to read.

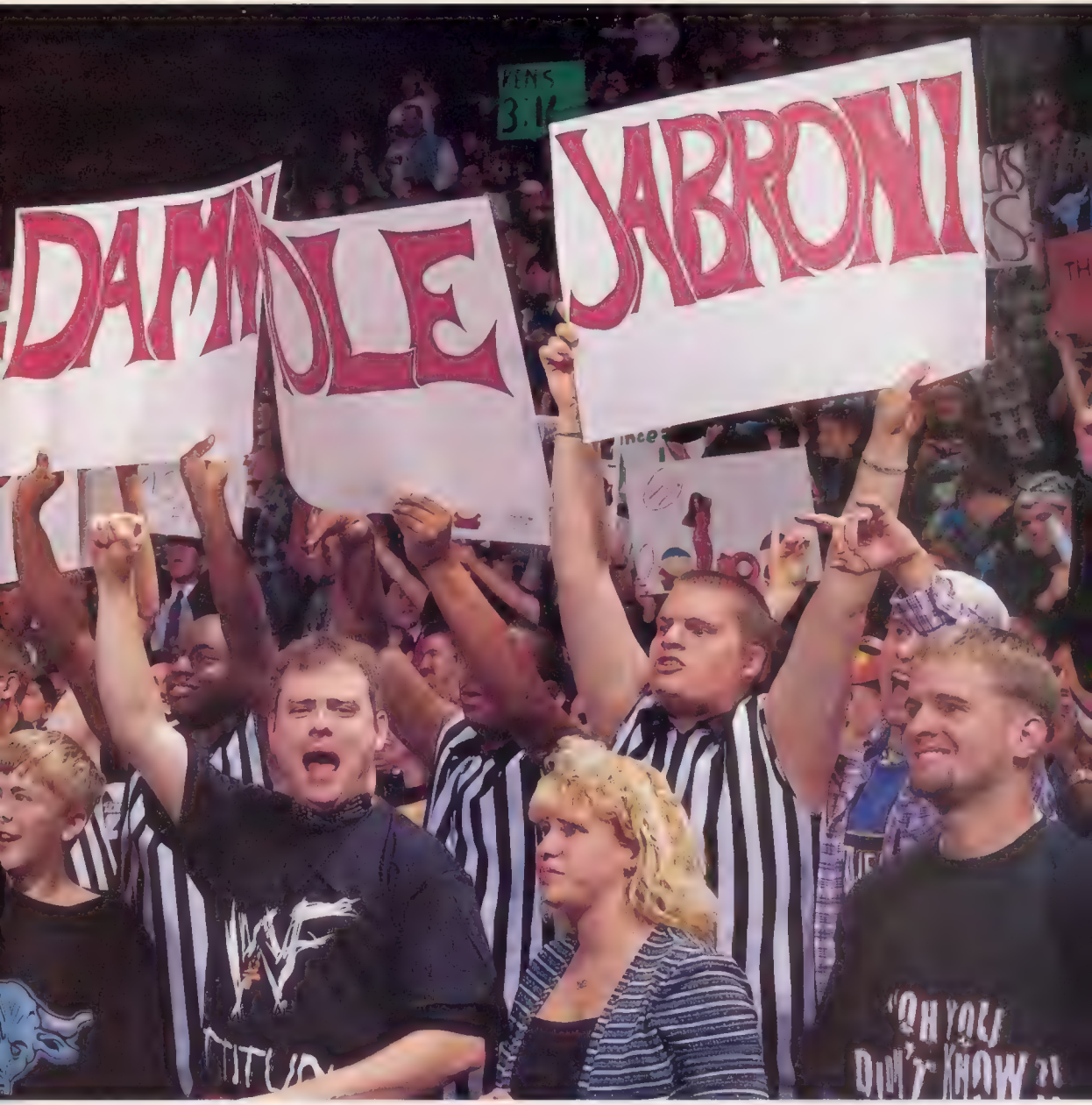
Here is Vince McMahon's response in full:

Mr. Paul Fuller
Satellite Beach, Florida

Dear Mr. Fuller,
It's obvious that you just don't get it! Much like Hollywood Studios, the World Wrestling Federation produces programming for different age groups. At 10 a.m. Eastern on Saturday and Sunday mornings on USA Network, the World Wrestling Federation produces programs that are PG-rated. Sunday at 7 p.m. Eastern, Sunday Night Heat, the rating is PG LV. Next Monday night prime time, 9 p.m. to 11 p.m., the rating is TV 14. Let this be your guide as to what is appropriate for your 11-year-old son.

However, as far as your opinion as to what you think professional wrestling should be, good vs. evil, good guy vs. bad guy, your taste seems to be stuck in a time warp, the same time when you were "enamored of such wrestling heroes as Dick the Bruiser." If you want this type of simplistic intelligence-insulting programming, we suggest that you watch Ted Turner's WCW. However, if you're looking for contemporary sports-entertainment that treats "professional wrestling" as an action/adventure soap opera, then the World Wrestling Federation is your ticket. With the sexuality of 90210, the subject matter of N.Y.P.D. Blue, the athleticism of the Olympics combined with reality-based story lines, the World Wrestling Federation presents a hybrid of almost all forms of entertainment and sports combined in one show.

I regret that your misquotes and one-sided commentary is so biased as to not



see the World Wrestling Federation for what it truly is. Obviously, you just don't get it!
Sincerely,
Vince McMahon
Chairman

P.S. In an effort to reach you via phone, directory assistance claims that there is no Paul Fuller listed or unlisted in Satellite Beach, Florida.

Another very vocal critic who has been writing about the World Wrestling Federation in the *New York Post* for years is sports columnist Phil Mushnick. He is always very critical of the Federation, but Mr. McMahon takes the time to answer all of Phil's jabs personally. Here are a few examples:

In the March 3, 1998, issue of the *New York Post*, Phil Mushnick wrote the following:

As kids grow more violent, we're presented, or confronted, with TV execs such as Stephen Chao, the new president of programming and marketing for USA Network. Last month, in an interview with the Los Angeles Times, Chao spoke of his great affection for professional wrestling. He cited his grandfather's love of the late Bobo Brazil.

But the relatively benign pro wrestling of the Bobo Brazil era, as opposed to the twisted social sickness that pro wrestling now sells to a mostly young audience, is the difference between the Brady Bunch and the Manson Family.

Chao has two sons, ages 7 and 4. If he can invite his two boys to sit with him and watch one of the Monday night [World Wrestling Federation] programs that appear on USA and still feel that he's doing right by his kids... we'd very much like to hear from him.

Vince McMahon answered Phil Mushnick in the following personal letter:

Mr. Phil Mushnick
New York Post—Sports

Dear Mr. Mushnick,
If Mr. Stephen Chao (or any other parent) allows or disallows his sons, ages seven and four, to stay up until 11 p.m. when World Wrestling Federation's Raw Is War goes off the air—that's his business, not yours. But, if you want to play the modern-day Dr. Spock and attempt to dictate parenting—that's your problem.

You seem to set yourself up as the moral conscience of the television viewer. It's as if the masses can't think for themselves; they need you to think for them—indeed, to dictate what should and should not be on television.

The World Wrestling Federation has been on television since the advent of the television. Perhaps the Bobo Brazil era was in fact benign compared to what the World Wrestling Federation is today. However, as pure entertainment, the World Wrestling Federation is no more, in fact quite probably a lot less "twisted and socially sick" than most television programs.

Nonetheless, every time you misrepresent what the World Wrestling Federation truly is and attempt to berate us, our ratings seem to go up; therefore, I remain thanking you in advance for future plugs.
Sincerely,
Vince McMahon
P.S. My open invitation to you to crawl out of your cowardly hole and meet me one on one for open, frank discussion continues to fall on deaf ears. Perhaps... you'll take me up on my repeated offer.

Stephen Chao has not been silent in his support for the World Wrestling Federation. In an article that appeared in the January 28, 1999, edition of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, television critic Phil Rosenthal wrote: "USA Network President Stephen Chao... says he doesn't have a problem with the [World Wrestling Federation]—as a parent or as a network chief."

Mr. Rosenthal goes further by quoting Stephen Chao as saying: "Is the show anti-social and does it have a bad message?... I unequivocally have zero problems with this show."

On September 17, 1998, in regards to a news story concerning the World Wrestling Federation not being able to hold events at the Catholic Youth Center in Scranton, Pennsylvania, Phil Mushnick wrote in his column in the *New York Post*: "[World Wrestling Federation] shows... are not merely raunchy, they're the most disgusting form of mainstreamed 'entertainment' regularly presented to young American audiences."

Vince McMahon responded to Mushnick this way:

Mr. Phil Mushnick
New York Post—Sports

Dear Phil,
Cardinal Richelieu, Henry VIII and "Beelzebub" himself were all "kicked out of church." If it weren't for sinners, there would be no saints.
Regards,
Vince

P.S. Last Monday [September 28, 1998] more male teens watched the World Wrestling Federation (966,000) than the National League Playoffs (196,000) and the NFL's Monday Night Football (683,000) combined (879,000). Is this a sign of the future? Oh, hell, yeah!

Mushnick continued his diatribe on this subject in his newspaper column, earning this response from Vince McMahon:

Mr. Phil Mushnick
New York Post—Sports
Dear Phil,
I have a great idea. How about you and the Bishop forming a new tag team? We will call you the Righteous Brothers. Wait a minute... wasn't that the name of a pop singing group in the 60s? How appropriate?
Your friend,
Mr. McMahon

Vince McMahon was quoted in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, January 28, 1999, as saying: "I deplore violence. That's not what we're about. There are many misconceptions.... Our language is no more colorful than anything else you'll see in prime time.... The World Wrestling Federation is Hollywood. It's Broadway. Maybe a dash of *Springer* thrown in here and there, some spare parts from the Road Runner cartoons, maybe a plot line stolen or borrowed from *One Life To Live*. We're a hybrid of just about everything on TV."

The decision is up to YOU, the viewers. There is no reason you have to watch World Wrestling Federation programming, unless it is your choice. There are hundreds of channels on the dial. For a parent, the decision about what to allow your children to watch is YOURS. As Vince McMahon stated, Federation programming on Saturday and Sunday mornings is produced with a younger audience in mind.

Federation programming in the evening hours is more adult-oriented, and the TV ratings at the beginning of the shows alert viewers to this fact. It is your decision what you, or your family, watch. What YOU, the television viewer, should be afraid of is NOT the World Wrestling Federation, but critics and newspaper journalists who want to control what you CAN watch! Freedom of Speech and the right to choose are the bottom line and a person who doesn't "get it" should not be allowed to dictate what we can—or cannot—watch. ■

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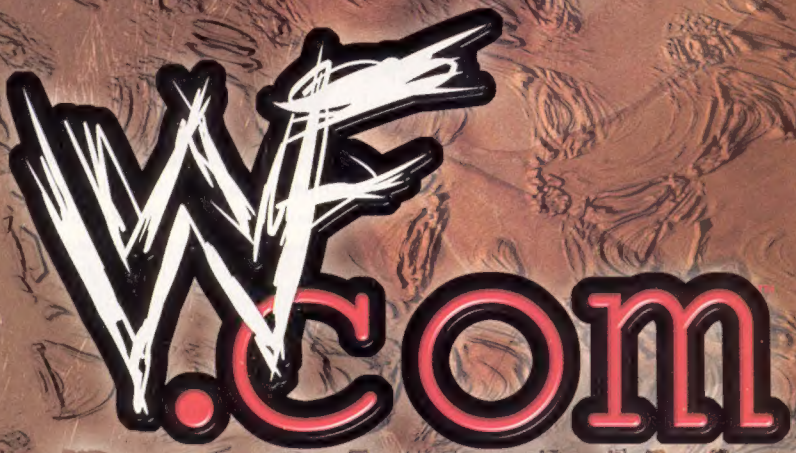
—Mankind



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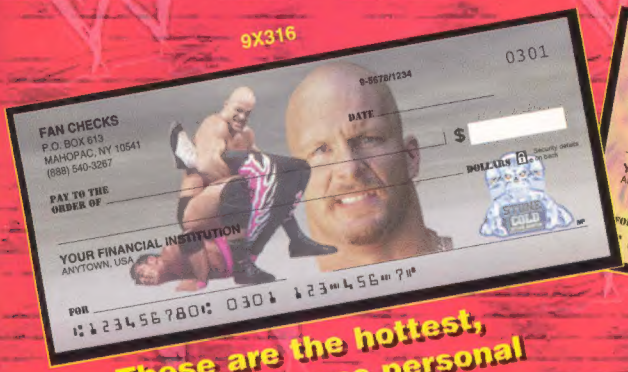

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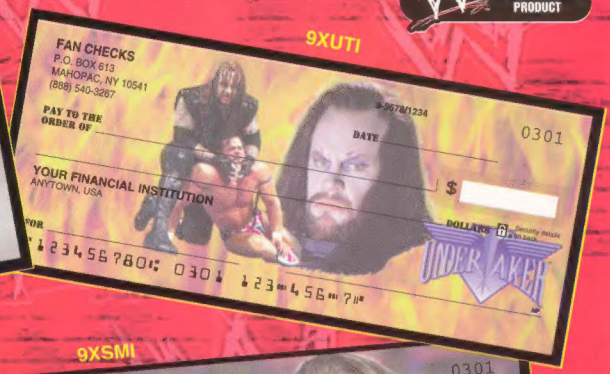

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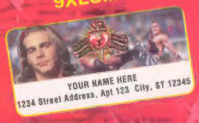

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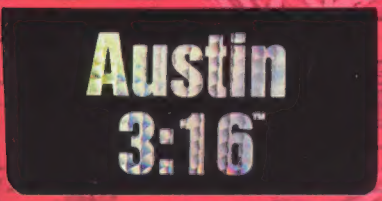

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